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Date: Wed, 28 Jul 1999 11:40:21 -0700
To: Harold_Varmus@nih.gov
From: Cozzarelli <ncozzare@socrates.berkeley.edu>
Subject: Conference call on E-biosci

Harold,

I just got off a conference call arranged by Floyd Bloom on E-biomed with a bunch of HighWire journal editors and publishers. Floyd presented an interesting plan for a free access experiment at HighWire, but I have seen nothing in writing. I used the call as an opportunity to urge the others to join in E-biomed at whatever level they feel comfortable. I learned 4 things.

1. Every other publisher is adamantly opposed to E-biomed being a direct gateway to their content. If they participate in E-biomed, they will do so only if their content is accessed only from their own site. I was surprised at the religious fervor with which this position was espoused.
2. The other journals were talking of lag times in release to E-biomed of 3 months to 2 years. Some were leaning to not participating at all. I told them that I hoped that PNAS would have 0 delay to a 2-issue delay in release to E-biomed.
3. There was a general fear of using page charges to pay for lost subscriptions. The issues brought up were losing authors to competitors and authors that can not afford page charges.
4. Floyd had an interesting proposal of a site license to NIH for journal content that would be an alternative to or a supplement to author charges. He will write it up.

There is no doubt that we need a critical mass of participating journals in E-biomed. Science will be much more willing to join, if Nature does, and vice versa. I feel that it is key to make it as easy as possible for the greatest number of journals to join in. I have no doubt that you will have to allow access only from the publishers site as an option, if you want to get the ball rolling quickly. With time, E-biomed will evolve with shorter lag times for release and more journals turning over access to it. I am continually surprised at how conservative journal editors and publishers are.

Nick

Nicholas R. Cozzarelli
401 Barker Hall
Department of Molecular and Cell Biology
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, Ca 94720
510 642-5266 Tel.
643-1079 Fax